



Part 45 – Lot’s Cave

Genesis 19:30-38

The last section of chapter 19 is a tragic epilogue to the story of Lot and his family. The events described rightly shock us. It is clear that though Lot and his daughters fled Sodom, much of Sodom remained in them. As Derek Kidner observes, “The end of choosing to carve out his career was to lose even the custody of his body. His legacy, Moab and Ammon, was destined to provide the worst carnal seduction in the history of Israel (that of Ball-Peor, Numbers 25) and the cruelest religious perversion (that of Molech, Leviticus 18:21). So much stemmed from a self-regarding choice (Genesis 13:10ff) and persistence in it.”¹

Vs. 30 – We are not told why Lot was afraid to live in Zoar. Certainly, in making such editorial choices Moses wants our focus to remain on the main ideas. But it’s also quite possible that in not telling us why Lot left Zoar we are being prompted to think about this very thing. Perhaps Lot was afraid that Zoar would face the same destruction as Sodom. Has life in any city become too frightening a prospect for Lot? For whatever reason, shelter in a cave along with his daughters seemed a safer bet. Whatever the case, we are left to wonder why Lot did not flee for safety to his uncle Abraham.

Vv. 31-36 – Lot’s daughters are not named. This may be a form of censure by Moses. Lot’s daughters recognized that their family line was about to be extinguished. In their world, this was a profound catastrophe, far more than in our own time. And since they did not flee to Zoar or, far better, to Abraham and his people, the only solution to their childlessness, in their minds, was their father. That Lot had to be made drunk in order to commit these acts with his daughters provides him with a bit of cover. His daughters knew he would never consent to such actions so long as he was in his right mind. Nevertheless, he must live with the consequences of his willing drunkenness and the sinful actions which came from that diminished state. And so this father who offered his daughters to rapists in Sodom was later manipulated to impregnate them. It is significant to note that incest was condemned by most if not all Ancient Near Eastern cultures at the time.

Vv. 37-38 – The two male offspring from this incestuous union were named Moab (from which the Moabites came) and Ben-ammi (from whom came the Ammonites). The sinful origins of these two peoples is not why they were ultimately judged. Indeed, their lands were considered God-given as was their right to dwell in those regions (Deuteronomy 2:9, 19). The Moabites and Ammonites became wicked people in their own right. Not only that, they became enemies of Israel (Numbers 23-25; Deuteronomy 23:3-6; 2 Kings 3). The Ammonites were worshipers of the detestable god Molech before whom they offered their children in sacrifice. Shortly before the death of Moses, the king of Moab, Balak, enlisted the prophet Balaam to place a curse on the people of Israel as they were entering the Land of Promise (Numbers 25, 31). Balaam engineered the program to entice Israel into idolatry and immorality.

Lot’s Darkness

- The account of Abraham and Lot draws a dramatic contrast between the two as men and as fathers. Abraham, the father of the faithful, is repeatedly presented as a model teacher, instructing his household and descendants in the ways of the Lord. In stark contrast, Lot allowed his daughters to absorb the ethics of Sodom. While Lot “personally” did not engage in the wickedness of Sodom, his silence and lack of courage to separate himself and his family from that wickedness left his daughters to be conformed to their worldly home. For many Christians, a desire to be well liked and respected by the world comes at the price of offering tacit approval to the world’s wickedness. In the previous section Lot’s moral confusion in offering his daughters to Sodomites is matched by his balking at the angel’s warnings to flee the swift approaching judgment of God. This moral laxity seems to be a theme of Lot’s life. Though personally abstaining from the wickedness of Sodom, his failure to oppose such wickedness allowed him the comfort and respect he seemed to crave. “It is possible, then, to be distressed by the world while hanging on to it for dear life.”²

¹ Derek Kidner, *Genesis*, TOTC (Downers Grove: IVP, 1967) p. 136

² R. Kent Hughes, *Genesis: Beginning and Blessing* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2004) p. 280

- Through all of this, one question presses to be answered: Why did Lot not flee to the safety of Abraham's tents? Why did he not seek refuge among the righteous? Even at his lowest; after he had lost his wife and his daughters and their husbands; after all his worldly goods were massacred in the flames of God's justice, Lot still did not run in the right direction.
- Though Lot seems to have personally abstained from the worst of Sodom's sins, he nevertheless gave passive approval. "Forthrightness would have jeopardized his standing. Lot had mastered the craft of turning a blind eye and a deaf ear to the social and sexual abuses of Sodom. He did not do them. He did not approve of them. But he did not speak out against them. Blasphemies and filthy speech were met by Lot's benign smile and deft deflection."³

The Daughters' Darkness

- Lot's years of compromises had long lasting consequences. In the case of his daughters, this passage indicates that they were true citizens of Sodom. They were not unaware of the censures against incest. Indeed, incest was widely condemned throughout the Ancient Near East. Obviously, it was strictly forbidden among the Hebrews (Leviticus 20:11-13; Ezekiel 22:10, 11). Additionally, the famous Code of Hammurabi, which became the law for much of the Mesopotamian world, condemned incest as did the law of the Hittites. Indeed, that Lot's daughters hatched a plan to get him drunk indicates that they knew he would never have willingly complied. Having been raised in Sodom, they knew how sensuality and drunkenness so often go together.

Theology Applied:

1. Expect your choices to have consequences.

- Do not be surprised that sinful choices tend to yield bitter consequences. The fact that Lot was drunk did not diminish his responsibility nor did it remove the consequences of his actions. Being drunk was no excuse just as intoxication is never an excuse for further sin. Nor is intoxication a "get out of consequences free" card. There may be many and varied explanations behind our sinful choices. But none of those explanations form an excuse.
- "Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap" (Galatians 6:7).
- "For they sow the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind" (Hosea 8:7).

2. Beware of sin.

- "Be killing sin or sin will be killing you," goes the old Puritan saying. What a contrast this is with an attitude that tolerates and even embraces certain sins as harmless diversions or even necessary indulgences. Not only do we often not fear sin, we have actually embraced it as a friend. We fear the absence of certain sins far more than we fear what those very sins do to us. We learn from Lot that it is not enough to personally avoid sin while approving of it all around us. We must beware of the sin in us and around us. We must resist it not only in our lives but in the lives of our children.

3. Consider your privilege.

- Privilege has certainly become a loaded word. But think about the spiritual privileges we have. Living as we do on this side of the cross and resurrection of Jesus, we have distinct privileges over the people of Sodom and Gomorrah. We have received the full revelation of God's Word with the gospel of Jesus Christ at the center. Speaking of those who reject the message of the gospel and the warnings of the coming judgment upon the world Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town" (Matthew 10:15).

4. Do not underestimate God's power to redeem.

- The soundings of God's gracious salvation run deep in this passage. For all of its darkness, God does not leave us without the promise of redemption. Though Moab was the product of sinful disgrace and though his descendants would prove to be a wicked people, there was one whose name we cannot forget: Ruth, the Moabite. And her grandson was King David whose Greater Son was the Lord Jesus Christ. No matter your sin; no matter your past, do not underestimate God's power to redeem you.

³ Ibid, 282